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One year 'Opening up' of East Timor

29 December 1988 was the official date of the opening up of East Timor. Much occurred in this twelve months, not in the last place Bishop Belo's call for a referendum and the controversial visit of the Pope. The opening up itself also remains to be a controversial and thorny issue for the Indonesian authorities, sometimes working as a boomerang against themselves. The unusual huge amount of reports on East Timor, both in the Indonesian and foreign press is undoubtedly the result of the ajar opening. It is worthwhile, beginning of the new year to compile some of the reports into a more conclusive and comprehensive report.

The door opened ajar

Part of the ABRI leaders, in particular General Murdani and friends, have from the beginning seen the venture of opening up as a futile and unnecessary exercise. But the arguments of the other side, notably Governor Carrascalao, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and Interior Minister General Rudini managed to convince the President that opening up would be useful for diplomatic and public relations purposes while at the same time efforts could be stepped up to attract foreign and domestic (=Indonesian) to invest in East Timor. It could be argued that none of these objectives have been met and the image of Indonesian illegal presence in East Timor has been widely exposed to the international public. Business investments did not take place, the war-ridden area could not convince any entrepeneur to to take the risk of investing.

The opening up of East Timor principally meant that gradually East Timor would be treated by Jakarta as a 'normal' province, not anymore as a special project of the Indonesian armed forces but under the management of the Ministery for the Interior. It was obvious from the beginning that this would not take place overnight and would be implemented step by step. By the end of 1989 only 8 out of the 13 subdistricts have been declared open for outsiders, a special visa is still needed to enter the region, a compulsory reporting to the authorities is still needed if one stays more than 24 hours in one place (in many places big signs remind people to report to the local police or military) and the roads are still full with military checkpoints. Between Dili and Baucau, a distance of 90 kms, 8 checkpoints were reported by a team of *Kompas* reporters. The Police Chief Lieut.Col. Ramli Surbakti confirms the tight control by saying: "Sooner or later, the people will get used to it".

In preparation of the Pope's visit, ABRI Com-

mander General Try Sutrisno promised the visiting foreign journalists freedom without any restrictions in East Timor. Again this freedom has a bumpy road n East Timor as Roy Eccleston from *the Australian* notes on the way between Baucau and LosPalos : "On the road we see 14 or 15 trucks filled with troops. We also notice a black jeep, which keeps us in sight all the way back to Dili. The same car is parked outside the military intelligence office the next day". Louise Williams from *The Sidney Morning Herald* had similar experiences and tells: "It is here (LosPalos) we meet the 'road contractors'. A bunch of overly friendly men with short haircuts. The sort of characters that shake your hand enthusiastically and hold on too long. There is no hotel, no-one comes here, and at night the road contractors are conveniently staying in the same house..... Curiously the black jeep filled with the jovial 'road contractors' is trailing behind. By nightfall, we seem to be playing chicken with the black jeep on the empty country road".

Most of the reports confirm the continuing human rights abuses, the huge presence of the Indonesian military and the constant atmosphere of fear the East Timorese have to endure. Quoting a local priest the *SMH* report mentions: "The fear here is if you do anything you can be detained anywhere, for anytime. People are very much afraid to talk. They just say they don't know, even if they know very well". An estimate of 12.000 to 15.000 Indonesian troops are permanently stationed in East Timor and another 5000 to 9000 commandos are used to fight the guerilla forces. The huge amount of military are involved in a wide range of activities, from more general security, social and construction work to the more specialised 'social control' of placing watches everywhere for those who might secretly support the resistance. The pervasiveness of the military is confirmed in all the reports and *Newsweek* reporter Rod Nordland remarks: "Indonesians - usually Army officers in civilian guise - occupy all key government posts, even in local communities. They dominate Dili's commercial life".

THe Indonesians have, for years, applied a two pronged strategy: fighting the guerillas and at the same time try to win the hearts and minds of the people. The huge amount of territorial troops indicate that the hearts and minds strategy has become the main objective while the KOOPSKAM, the special military command for East Timor, is assigned to contain the battle with the guerillas. Colonel Prabowo's assignment in East Timor (see *Tapol* bulletin no 96) was to tie the two strategies more intimately with each other. Captured guerillas, for example, are not killed on the spot anymore, but used

as propaganda that the Indonesians are human rights champions. The captured guerillas are (mis)used as hostages and often have to give statements to foreign visitors. The reporter from *The Australian* notes that catholic nuns in Timor are doubting whether the captives are in a position to speak the truth. Under threat of dire consequences for their next of kin, the ex-guerillas are in a tricky position. *The Australian* quotes from a private interview with the nuns:

> ....."Here they are just instruments too. If they are ordered (by the Indonesians) to kill, they have to kill". They go with the military to fight? "They fight also", says the nuns. Do they feel they are traitors? "They feel they have to comply, they feel compelled to obey the orders.. yes, they are threatened if they do not help".

The opening of the region for outsiders always had two edges, the ones running the daily security affairs in East Timor are the least happy. Police Lt. Colonel E.Surbakti, East Timor Chief of Police Force, argues the opening up should be done in a slow pace (*pelan-pelan*), it is notonly a matter of inviting tourists and earning foreign currency. Other factors should also be considered, he says, like security, politics and cultural.

The role of the church

It is interesting how the role of the church is being described in the recent reports. Ever since Bishop Belo's plea for a referendum, the relation between the church and the the two other forces: the military and the local government, has deteriorated quite fast. On the other hand the people of East Timor have shown on several occasions to be prepared to take daring risks to defend the church i.e. its leader Bishop Belo. The report in *The Australian* states :

> If stomachs are empty, the churches are full. "In times of hardship, people turn to faith," says another priest.

The report continues:

> The military realise the power of the Church. And they do not like it....."Maybe there are Fretilin symphatisers in the Church," says one officer."Maybe some priests are also sympathisers."..... In Jakarta a member of the Government goes further: "Priests should tell the truth, but the world is full of priests not knee-deep, but neck-deep in politics. There is a small core, four or five priests of Portugese descent who are violently political in East Timor".

This observation is confirmed in a serie of 6 articles in the leading Indonesian morning daily *Kompas* and describes the Church as the place where the East Timorese find solace and protection for everything. The role of the clergy is so influential, that the two forces (government and military) really have to consider very carefully. Wrong or hasty steps and the population will immediately show their disagreement. In other words to approach the people, the two forces should behave in a nice way towards the clergy.

It is obvious that the Church has a very difficult role to play. The recent outbursts for independence concentrated in the two major Catholic schools Fatumaca in the East and Externato Sao Jose in Dili, has made the military even more suspicious about the role of the clergy - who also function as teachers at the schools. The recent wave of arrests consist mainly of pupils from the two schools. The priests argue that they want to raise the children to be good Catholics while Jakarta wants good Indonesians first and good Catholics on the second place. As the Australian journalists note the struggle for selfdetermination has taken many shapes, and is not only confined to the 14 year long guerilla war in the hills and jungle of East Timor. Louise Williams remarks:

> The battle now is for freedom of speech and the retention of a local identity in the face of the all-pervasive security apparatus of the Indonesians and their imported Javanese ways. And behind that conflict lies the desperate need for economic development. Nowadays, that much more subtle battle is being fought largely by the local front-line campaigners for human rights - the priests and nuns of the Catholic Church.

The coffee-trade and the economy

Coffee remains the prime commodity in East Timor, approximately 60% of the export earnings originate from the coffee trade. Moreover according to the present Indonesian statistics, about 30% of the Timorese peasants (38.788 out of a total of 132.137 peasant families) are coffeegrowers. Most of the coffee growers are concentrated in the coffee-growing centres like Ermera, Liquisa and Ainaro. Coffee is grown on plots, a total of 48.950 ha and the official earnings of the region, amounting to 1,3 billion rupiahs is almost entirely due to the coffee taxes. About 30 to 40% of the available commercial vehicles are used for the coffee transport. For the East Timorese peasants, coffee growing remains an important activity.

Still, the story of the coffee is far from a suc-

cess story. The earlier mentioned *Kompas* articles cover a well researched item on the difficulties regarding the coffee growing and trade. The situation of the coffee business bears a lot of concern. The production, in spite of growing acreage, is still falling down. In 1984 the production figures were 8.600 ton (from 47.648 ha) while in 1988 the production figures plumetted to 6179 ton in a growing size of 48.950 ha. It means an average yield of 125-130 kg per ha. The pre invasion figures gave an average yield of 500 kg. The major factors of decline are the neglect of many plots due to abandonment, and the age factor of the coffee bushes. The neglect of and the subsequent abandonment of the plots took place when the population had to flee from their villages during the massive Indonesian invasion from 1975 up to 1979. Gradually some of the original population has come back to tend their plots but years of neglect strongly affects the yield. The Indonesian administration has made attempts to boost the coffee production through a special rejuvenation and rehabilitation project. As this project applies modern agricultural methods including the use of pesticides and insecticides and chemical fertilisers, the local coffee growers have greeted the project with great suspicion. On coffee grower explains: "Too much fertiliser will ruin the aroma of the coffee". The project has apparently failed, due to many factors like lack of planning and power to convince the Timorese. The general trend remains that the Timorese regard the Indonesian schemes with a lot of suspicion.

In the trade of the commodity, the situation is even worse. In six months time Governor Carrascalao had to issue 3 decrees regarding the coffee trade. Himself as part of the Carrascalao family, owner of the biggest coffee plantations is very much involved in the the attempts to improve the whole coffee business. While the coffee growers in Indonesia are most or less secured of a stable price, the Timorese growers are in the hands of mercy of the coffee buyers. These are often plainclothes military or directly people from P.T. Denok, the military cover for a monopoly trading company. Although officially ten companies are registered as coffee buyers, only P.T. Denok is functioning as such. While the coffee price in Indonesia soared up to Rp 4000,- the price in East Timor was artificially kept at bottom prices of Rp. 1000,-. The *Kompas* article compares the present situation with the monopoly position of the Portugese in the pre-1975 days. Carrascalao has struggled very hard to get rid of the special status of East Timor, which everybody knows virtually means East Timor is run directly by the army. The Governor tried to break the monopoly of Denok by boosting the *KUD, Koperasi Unit Desa*, the

Village Cooperative Unit (Government led). This unit was given the authority to buy the coffee from the peasants with set prices, hoping to bypass the roving 'traders'. It did not work as the local KUD gave the authority to the same traders to buy directly from the growers. In June 1989, the set KUD prices were Rp 2300,-/kg for A quality and Rp 1900,-/kg for the B quality. The traders use the stereotype argument of low quality and the low world market prices. Instead of aiding the deprived peasants, the KUD charges Rp 50,- tax for every kg coffee sold to the traders. *Kompas* sources say that up to September the KUD has reaped a tax of Rp 750 million from the coffee, but no one knows where the money is. Carrascalao decided to file his second decree (24 August 1988) establishing a special team to decide the price of the coffee. This attempt also failed as the prices set by the new team were simply ignored by the Denok traders and the price was kept low. In October 1989 Governor Carrascalao decided to issue a new decree, dismissing the earlier decrees and letting the whole coffee trade free as a bird. The Governor is now trying to break the Denok monopoly by inviting anybody who wants to buy coffee, please drop by in East Timor. Whether this scheme will inflict the power of P.T. Denok is doubtful,but the Governor's business interests has been jeopardised long enough.

Land conversion

Another quite complicated matter that has become a growing issue of concern is the matter of landownership. In the Indonesian 1945 Constitution article 33 mentions that all the natural resources in pricipal belong to the people. This article has often been (mis)used to confiscate or expropriate land, whenever it is needed for state purposes. Similarly the Indonesian government also wants to go ahead and implement the Indonesian laws (including the Basic Agrarian Law) into practice in East Timor. As a former Portugese colony (more correctly an Portugese overseas province), the 1961 Portugese Agrarian Law is still seen by the East Timorese as the valid law. Jakarta decided not to create more international uproar by confiscating all the land and is cautiously moving step by step. Since 1982 the land ownership has been gradually been inventarised, according to the Portugese Law no 2001/1944. About 800 certificates has been issued as *alvara* (definite certificate), *alvara de concessao provisoria* (provisory certificate) or *alvara indigena* (traditional land rights). Another complication is the virtual upheaval of the enire population, leaving thousands of ha empty and untended. The chief of *BPN, Badan Pertanahan Nasional*-/National Land Board for East Timor P. Suryosuwarno

argues that land is the only possession the East Timorese has got left since their livestock and houses were destroyed. To be able to get some capital to trade, the Timorese need to have clarification about their land rights. The BPN is a newly established body, directly under the responsibility of President Suharto, with the daunting task to handle the explosive land issues all over the archipelago. On several occasions the East Timorese have demanded clarity about landrights and Suryosuwarno the BPN official is moving very cautiously not to create even more confusion. Some East Timorese have quite openly demanded to maintain the existing Portugese Law in the case of East Timor, but obviously the officials from Jakarta insist that sooner or later the Indonesian Agrarian Laws be implemented. In the existing Agrarian Law of 1960, the right of conversion into different categories of landownership or usage of land is regulated, using the Dutch Law. While the Portugese law is quite different the conversion from Protugese into Indonesian Law will take quite a different procedural way.

In the meantime the landissue in East Timor has become quite complex. *Kompas* takes an example of the Aileu subdistrict. Since 1975 (the year of the invasion) up to now the population has decreased by half, from 40.000 to 20.000. Similar as the coffee plots thousands of ha agricultural land has been abandoned by the population due to the war efforts. Moreover a growing number of East Timorese refugees abroad also possess land and in most cases has transferred the land to the next of kin who remains in Timor. For East Timor a special Laksusda regulation (Laksusda is the territorial command for the security body Kopkamtib, dissolved in 1988). According to this regulation *Laksusda Nusra No 40/1979*, it is not possible to transfer landrights unless approved by the Laksusda. According to the same regulation land previously owned by the Portugese administration automatically becomes property of the local government while land owned by the the Portugese military will fall into the hands of ABRI. It is not clear, whether the dissolvement of Kopkamtib (replaced by Bakorstanasda) means that the regulation has become invalid, but it is clear that the body BPN has yet to begin its work to define the status of the different land certificates. In particular the indigenous land rights in East Timor that in most of the cases do not involve certificates or documents. Since 1981 the Indonesian administration have issued many certificates for people possessing or using land with previous Portugese documents, without documents, landtitles and redistribution documents. In the finalisation of converting the Portugese laws into the Indonesian laws, it will be

doubtful whether the earlier issued certificates will keep its validity. The period of uncertainty will remain for quite some time, even Governor Carrascalao can't give answer and refers to Jakarta, where the final say is made.

The Indonesianisation of East Timor

As explained in many reports the Indonesianisation is particularly felt in Dili. From a sleepy provincial town of 30.000 inhabitants, Dili has grown almost fourfold, into more than 100.000 inhabitants. Dili is now often being compared with Yogyakarta, the bustling centre of Javanese culture. Many of the civil servants originate from Yogya, many high civil servants are Gajah Mada graduates, the university of Yogya and the newly established Universitas Timtim can be seen almost as a branch of the Gajah Mada University. Even the pace in Dili has become Yogyanese, a long siesta in the afternoon - while the indigenous Timorese, like Governor Carrascalao tend to skip the afternoon nap. The 'advancements' of Indonesian rule in East Timor has brought little benefit for the Timorese. The shop owners, the supermarkets, high positions in the local government are all in the hands of the Indonesians. The supermarkets are mostly filled with Indonesian customers, civilians and military, as the average Timorese lack the purchasing power. The *Kompas* reporters noted that only some street hawkers like cigarette sellers, shop employees and taxi drivers are indigenous Timorese, a similar situation like West Papua. Governor Carrascalao is very much aware of the domination of the Indonesians and in particular of the Javanese and is fighting a Don Quixotte struggle to introduce more East Timorese in the provincial administration.

Integrasi

The Bishop's call for a referendum did not fall from the sky, the resentment of the Timorese towards Indonesian colonialism has remained consistent and the open protests against integration has only grown. In the late seventies the Indonesian authorities, realising the difficulties they had with the old generation of Timorese, decided to bet on the young generation. In particular if they are provided Indonesian education, it was argued, the young generation of East Timorese will automatically immerse into Indonesian citizens. Ten years later, by the beginning of the nineties, it has become clear that the young generation brought up under Indonesian occupation, are defiant as ever. The voice of protest is growing and Governor Carrascalao's option to operate within the Indonesian system (for retention of the Timorese identity, culture and identity) is fastly losing ground.

At the end of November, Carrascalao travelled around for three days to the villages to convince the people that the option of referendum is wrong. He made an appeal for unity among the Timorese and almost as a ritual pleas to those who still fight in the mountains to come down and unite with the rest of the Timorese. The Indonesian appointed governor is fastly losing influence, since his efforts to fight the army monopoly over the coffee, he has made many new enemies among the Indonesian military. The recently appointed vice-governor, Colonel Saridjo is not taking a back seat and carries a lot of weight and influence among the fellow Javanese civil servants. Carrascalao, who in his daily routine, very often can protect East Timorese from persecution, disappointed his countrymen by vehemently refuting the bishop's call for a referendum. More than ever the governor is confronted with the fact that the pre 1975 Timorese political and social structures are still predominant. The Timorese are rejecting Indonesian values, everything coming from Indonesia is second rate - argues the average Timorese. His efforts to attract foreign and Indonesian private capital (industry and mass tourism) have been futile so far. The land conversion, part of the scheme to attract capital from outside is still years from realisation, the governor annoyingly remarks "A lot of talk. Everytime I meet them (potential investors), they say they are interested. But it remains mere lip service".

Based on information from the following newsitems:

Resisting the stifling cloak of Indonesian rule, Louise Williams, *Sidney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1989 ;
The slow taming of Timor, Roy Eccleston, *The Australian*, 21 October 1989;
Catatan dari Timtim (serie of 6 articles), St. Sularto & Damyan Godho, *Kompas*, 29 November - 4 December 1989;
Visiting a forgotten war, Rod Nordland, *Newsweek*, 23 October 1989;
Investor, baru asal omong, Ibrahim G. Zakir, *Editor* 9 December 1989;
Suara Pembaruan 9 & 23 November 1989.